

What do consumers think about brand purpose

November 2021

Presented by James Myring
James.Myring@BVA-Group.com





Peter Field has produced new research on brand purpose

Criticism of brand purpose is 'naïve and unjustified', claims Peter Field

In new research by the effectiveness expert, well-executed brand purpose cases are found to drive a higher number of large business and brand effects than cases without purpose.



By Michaela Jefferson | 12 Oct 2021

Share this article



Purpose campaigns vs non purpose campaigns

- Non purpose campaigns: **1.6** business effects
- Well executed purpose campaigns: **2.1** business effects

But the methodology has come under heavy fire for not comparing apples with apples

Richard Shotton posted a series of tweets on the subject



Shotton highlights that the research compares **well executed** purpose ads with **all** non-purpose ads

If you compare **all purpose ads** with **all non purpose ads** it tells a different story:

- All non purpose campaigns **1.6** *business effects*
- All purpose campaigns **1.1** *business effects*

Byron Sharp seems very much against brand purpose

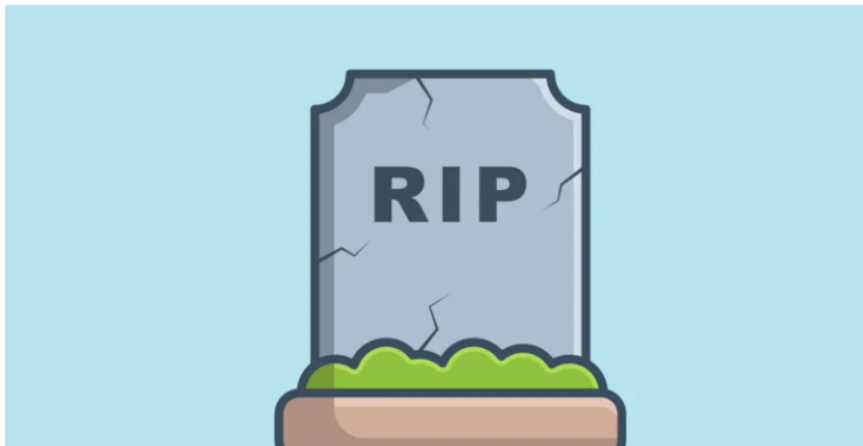
Purpose could be 'the death of brands', warns Byron Sharp

Warning of a 'cultural cringe' and sense of insecurity within marketing, Professor Byron Sharp is calling on marketers to stop the self-hatred and have more pride in their profession.



By Michaela Jefferson | 18 Oct 2021

Share this article



Sharp feels it is not distinctive

"it's just so easy to copy"

It could result in brands being replaced by private labels

"Retailers will just dominate"

And..

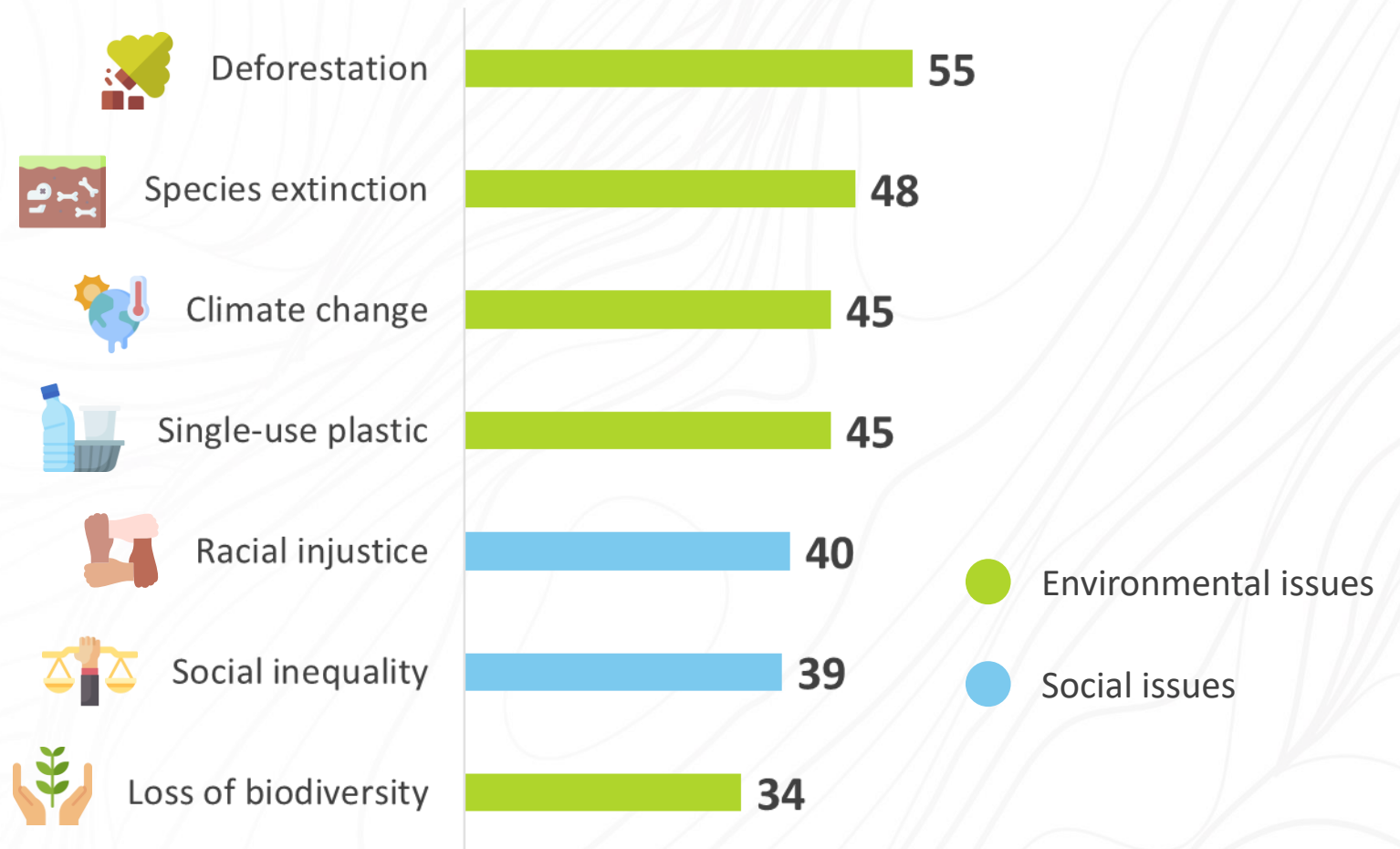
"it could be the end of brands"

What do consumers think about the issues



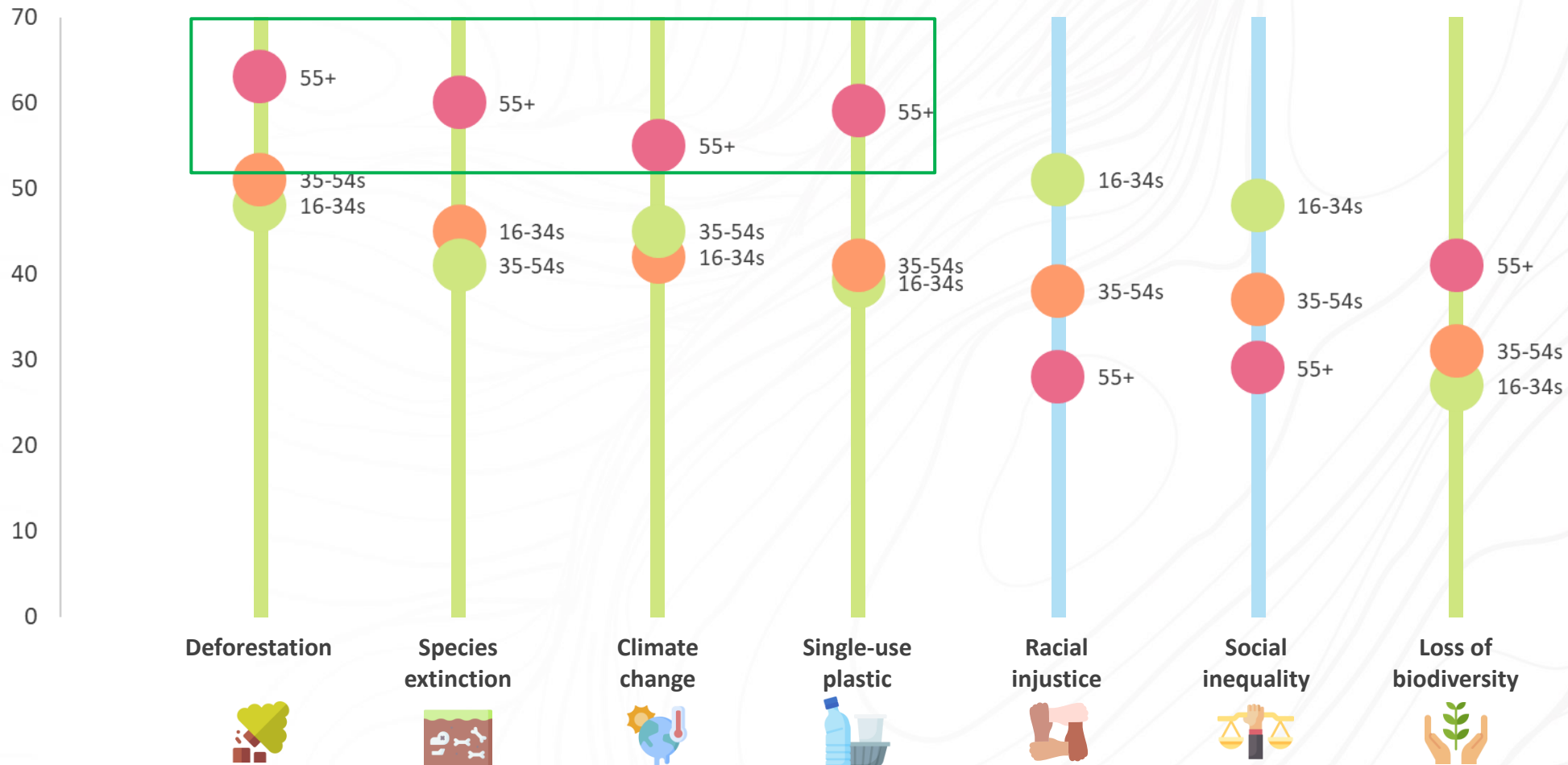
People are more concerned about environmental issues than social issues

How concerned are you about the following?
(% Very concerned)



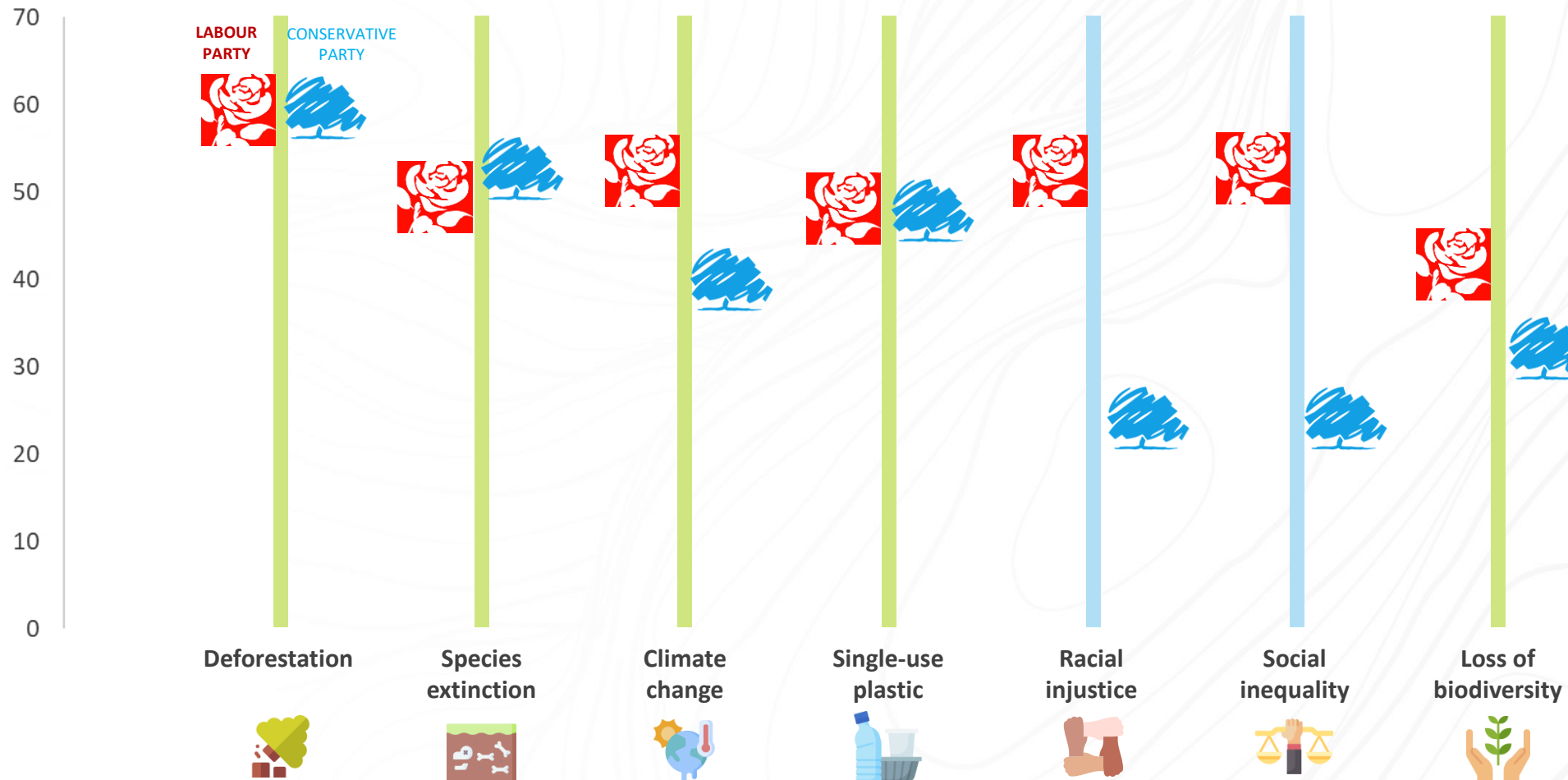
Myth-busting: Environmentalism is not just 'a young-person's thing'

How concerned are you about the following? (% Very concerned by age)



Myth-busting: Environmentalism is non-partisan

How concerned are you about the following? (% Very concerned by age)

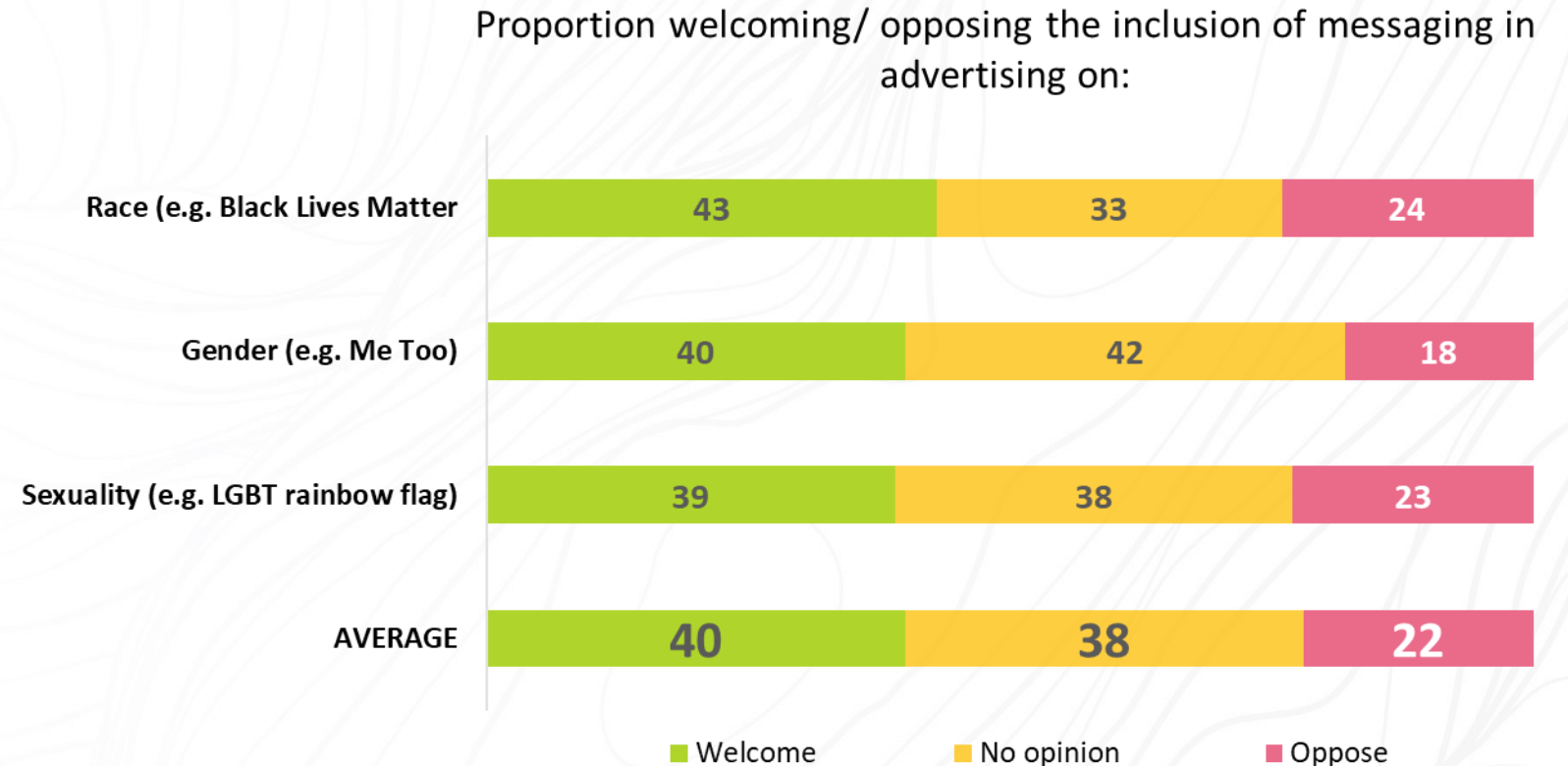


Consumer reaction to the incorporation of social purpose messaging in brand advertising



There is significant support for the inclusion of social purpose messaging, but it is not majority support

How consumers react to brands including messaging on race, gender, sexuality ('social' brand purpose) in their advertising



Support for the inclusion of 'social purpose' messaging varies considerably by demographic group

% welcoming the inclusion of messaging in advertising

	Total	Male	Female	Under 35	35-54	55+	ABC1	C2DE
Race (e.g. BLM)	43%	39%	46%	51%	45%	35%	46%	39%
Gender (e.g. Me Too)	40%	34%	44%	49%	40%	32%	41%	38%
Sexuality (e.g. rainbow flag)	39%	31%	45%	50%	40%	29%	40%	36%
AVERAGE	40%	35%	45%	50%	42%	32%	42%	38%

Support for the inclusion of 'social purpose' messaging varies considerably by demographic group

% welcoming the inclusion of messaging in advertising

	Total	Main shopper	Heavy social media users	Heavy TV viewers	White	BAME	Political Right*	Political Left**
Race (e.g. BLM)	43%	39%	55%	40%	42%	50%	29%	56%
Gender (e.g. Me Too)	40%	37%	48%	36%	40%	35%	26%	50%
Sexuality (e.g. LGBT rainbow flag)	39%	35%	48%	34%	39%	36%	26%	49%
AVERAGE	40%	37%	50%	37%	40%	40%	27%	52%

*Right = those who voted Conservative or Brexit party in the last general election

**Left = others – mostly Labour/ Lib Dems/ Greens/ Welsh & Scottish nationalists

Why do consumers think about the way they do about social purpose



Those in favour of 'social purpose' messaging...



*I think it is important that adverts are inclusive and **promote diversity***

Female, 25-34, East Midlands, B



*I'm **not racist** so I don't see any issues*

Female, 45-54, East Anglia, C2



*Because this is very quickly becoming a **normal** way of life and we need to **teach our children** that not all families are the same way some have two mummies some have two daddies but it's normal*

Female, 45-54, East Anglia, C2

Those against social purpose messaging..



*Advertising agencies will jump on any **bandwagon**. To me it is all very cynical and false. Trying to reflect our society through adverts paints an ideal image of diversity, which is not the case in reality*

Male, 55-64, Scotland, B



*I just **don't care** about sexuality, and it should not be a theme included in adverts*

Female, 45-54, East Anglia, C2



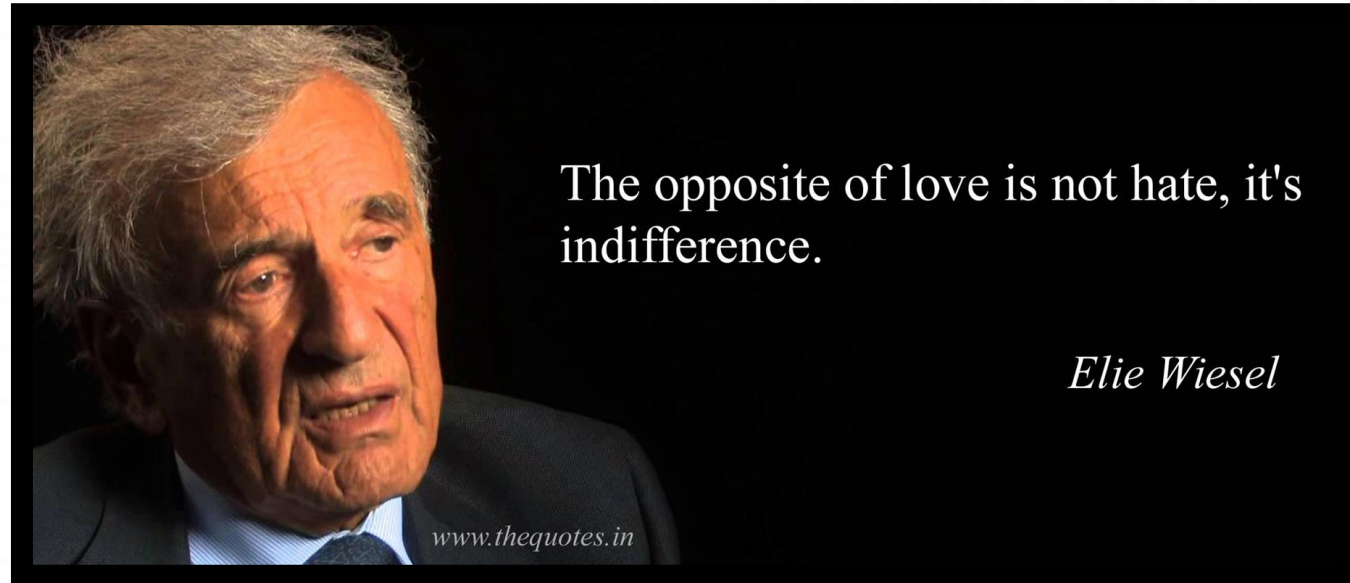
*I think the UK is a very tolerant country and I am **fed up** with **companies trying to cash in on the latest fad** and opinions and wanting to be seen as doing the right thing*

Female, 45-54, Yorkshire/Humberside, C2

For all the talk of social purpose being divisive, perhaps most significant is that (on average) 38% express no opinion



It's easy to forget about this large group, but...



Reasons for having no opinion – for many it is something they are just not very interested in



*Because I don't really have opinion on race colour or creed **we all bleed the same**....*

Male, 35-44, Wales, B



*It **doesn't affect me** personally*

Female, 25-34 Scotland, C1



*I **don't really listen** to these modern day issues*

Male, 35-44, East Anglia, B

Reasons for having no opinion – quite a few see it more negatively



Mainly a **virtue signalling** exercise by brands

Male, 65+, London, B



These have to be addressed, but it just seems to be a lot of **bandwagon jumping** by people

Male, 45-54, East Midlands, C1



I'm for the causes, but don't like them being used as **advertising propaganda**

Male, 25-34 North West, B



People were **getting along fine** in modern times, it's only recently skin colour had been brought into everything

Male, 25-34, East Midlands, C2



I have no problem with people who are LGBTQ+ but emphasising it in adverts could **alienate people** the same way that emphasising straight people could do the same. At the end of the day people are people sexuality is only a small part of people's lives

Male, 45-54 North West, B

Also, quite a number of those who welcomed this social purpose messaging in principle caveated their answers...



*It is most certainly a relevant issue to be addressed - some people just **jump on the wagon** though*

Female, 35-44, Greater London, C1



*.....I feel that too many companies try to **commercialise current sexuality trends** to build rapport to the extent that it feels farcical.*

Male, 25-34 South East, C1



*There's inclusion and there's **laying it on too thick**, or positive discrimination*

Female, 35-44, West Midlands, C2

Whilst more welcomed social purpose messaging than were opposed the following should also be taken into account....



Those who welcomed the messaging on average wrote an average of **11** words each when asked why.

Those opposing averaged **22** words



Quite a number of those with 'no opinion' on the subject are more negative when asked why



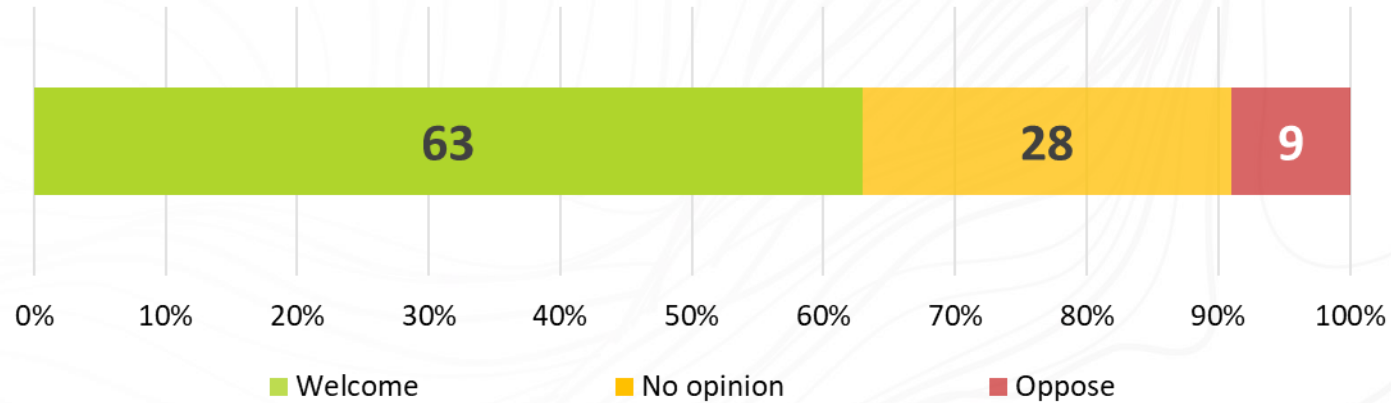
Some who welcome social purpose messaging *in principle* express caveats ..

However is it a different story with environmental purpose messaging?



The inclusion of messaging on the environment is more popular and support is more consistent across demographics

Proportion welcoming/ opposing the inclusion of messaging in advertising on the environment (e.g. climate change):



% welcoming the inclusion of messaging on the environment (e.g. climate change) in advertising

Total	Male	Female	Under 35	35-54	55+	ABC1	C2DE	Main shopper	Heavy social media viewer	Heavy TV viewers	White	BAME	Political Right*	Political Left**
63%	60%	65%	62%	59%	66%	65%	60%	60%	68%	62%	63%	60%	57%	68%

*Right = those who voted Conservative or Brexit party in the last general election

**Left = others – mostly Labour/ Lib Dems/ Greens/ Welsh & Scottish nationalists

The environment is seen as an inclusive issue that affects everybody



*The environment is important for **everyone's** future*

Female, 65+, South East, C2



*The earth feeds us protects us and gives us medicine and oxygen so there is no question this is **vital to us all***

Female, 25-34, West Midlands, B



*It is not the place of businesses to take part in politics but the environment affects **everybody***

Female, 65+, South East, E

Although there are still some with reservations about its inclusion in brands messaging



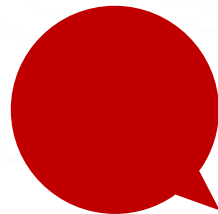
*I'm not sure how much I trust brands to be honest about environmental issues. A lot of it is probably **greenwashing***

Male, 45-54, London, B



*I have **no influence** on these matters*

Male, 65+, Northwest, A



*Because **I don't believe it's all doom and gloom** and it's not right people are making kids think that the world is on a path to disaster*

Male, 18-24, West Midlands, C1

Introducing our new sustainability segments



Let's start with a simple categorisation



The **Advocates** are those who truly believe in the sustainability cause



The **Agnostics** are those who nod their heads and agree, yet they aren't acting on it



The **Antagonists** are those who actively disagree or don't care at all.

Mapping and sizing our segments – most are agnostics

Eco Evangelists



“We need to save the world and I’m doing whatever it takes to play my part”

Good Intentions



“I try to be green but it’s difficult and pretty overwhelming”

Accidentally Green



“I look after the things I own and turn off the lights. If that makes me green, then so be it”

Affluent Hedonists



“Life is about enjoyment and experiences – I’m not cutting back on that for anyone”

Climate Sceptics



“Climate change is just another way of controlling what we do.”

16

27

19

27

11

ADVOCATES

AGNOSTICS

ANTAGONISTS

And of course, beware of group think!

Eco Evangelists

Good Intentions

Accidentally Green

Affluent Hedonists

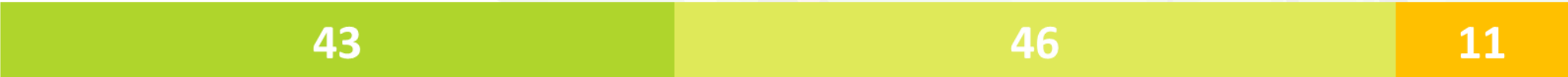
Climate Sceptics



The public



BVA travel seminar attendees



Is a lot of brand purpose advertising designed by advocates for advocates?



Produced by Andrew Tenzer of Reach Solutions and Ian Murray of house51 the report is thought provoking

The report points out that **29%** of the modern mainstream were AB at age 14 compared to **71%** of advertising industry professionals

It points out that the industry can end up **“targeting ourselves”**

And that **“No one believes social virtue influences buying, not even advertisers and marketers”**

And even speculates **“Perhaps social virtue is simply something that helps advertisers and marketers feel better amongst ourselves”**

**What does this all mean
for brands?**

- 1 There is substantial ***opposition*** to social purpose, this is not the case for environmental purpose where support is higher
- 2 There is also considerable ***indifference*** towards purpose messaging - this can lead to low engagement
- 3 As Byron Sharp points out, purpose is easy to copy, consequently it can be hard to make it ***distinctive*** (although our research indicates that Dove have managed this in a congruent way)
- 4 Groupthink is something to be wary of – given the ***opportunity cost*** of purpose messaging, it is important to **research your audience**

- 1 There is substantial ***opposition*** to social purpose, this is not the case for environmental purpose where support is higher
- 2 There is also considerable ***indifference*** towards purpose messaging - this can lead to low engagement
- 3 As Byron Sharp points out, purpose is easy to copy, consequently it can be hard to make it ***distinctive*** (although our research indicates that Dove have managed this in a congruent way)
- 4 Groupthink is something to be wary of – given the *opportunity cost* of purpose messaging, it is ~~important~~ **vital** to **research your audience**

What do consumers think about brand purpose

November 2021

Presented by James Myring
James.Myring@BVA-Group.com

